

## OPERATION AND SERVICES

### 1.0 General Program Operations and Services Information

#### 1.1 Purpose

The purpose of the Pre-K program is to provide full day (6.5 hours of instructional services), five days per week, 36 weeks (180 days) per year of appropriate educational/instructional services to eligible four-year-old children.

#### 1.2 Dates of Service

The 2008-2009 school year Pre-K program shall operate within the dates stated in the contract.

#### 1.3 Days of Service

Pre-K providers are required to prepare and provide a school year calendar that accounts for 190 days which includes 180 days of service to families and 10 days of Pre-K related activities/duties (pre- and post-planning, staff development, in-service days.) Pre-K staff cannot be used to provide services unrelated to Pre-K during the 190-day school year.

### 2.0 Child/Family Eligibility

#### 2.1 Age Requirement

Children must be four years of age on September 1, 2008, based on acceptable documentation, such as birth certificates, passports, official medical documents, legal documents, or official documents from other countries. Only age-eligible children whose birthdates are from September 2, 2003, through September 1, 2004, are eligible for participation in the 2008-2009 school year. **Proof of age eligibility must be on file the day the child begins the Pre-K program.** Payments shall be reduced for children without age documentation beginning with the first day of school.

Children who are five years of age on September 1, 2008, and have late birthdays (birthdays in June, July, and August) or have delayed language and/or social skills or small physical size, which would impact their readiness for school, may enroll in the Pre-K program **IF** they did not attend Georgia's Pre-K Program as four year olds. Parents and teachers are encouraged to consider the child's date of birth, physical maturity, emotional maturity, and prior experiences when making the decision about whether to enroll the child in the Pre-K program at age four or five. Parents should check with the local school system or private site for specific enrollment policies concerning 5 year olds.

Children who are six years of age on September 1, 2008 and are age eligible for first grade entrance are not eligible for enrollment in the Georgia's Pre-K Program.

If a child enrolls as a four-year-old and it is determined that the child is not benefiting, the family may withdraw the child within the child's first 30 days of enrollment and remain eligible to enroll in Pre-K the

following year. Parents of five-year-old children shall be asked to sign a Parent Acknowledgement Form (see Appendix H) indicating that the child did not previously attend Georgia's Pre-K Program for longer than 30 days. Providers may copy this form on company and/or location letterhead.

Children who attend Pre-K shall transition to public school kindergarten the following year. Bright from the Start shall review requests for children to repeat Pre-K on a case-by-case basis. All such requests should be submitted in writing to the Pre-K Inclusion Coordinator and include the reason(s) for the request, copies of the completed assessment tool with supporting documentation, doctor's recommendations, interventions during the Pre-K program year, special education referrals, evaluations conducted, etc. **All requests to repeat Pre-K and supporting documentation must be received by Bright from the Start by May 1, 2009.**

Please mail requests to:

Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning  
ATTN: Request for Repeating Pre-K  
10 Park Place South, Suite 200  
Atlanta, GA 30303

## **2.2 Residency Requirement**

The child must be a Georgia resident. For purposes of this program, Georgia resident is defined as a child who resides in the state of Georgia. Proof of residency should be part of a child's on-site file prior to or on the first day of Pre-K.

## **2.3 Parent Requirement**

A parent must agree to send the child to the Pre-K program for 6.5 hours of instructional time, five days per week, 180 days per year. A child who is chronically tardy or absent can be disenrolled from the program. A child who is not enrolled in the extended day program and is not picked up at the end of the Pre-K day on a regular basis can be disenrolled. (See Section 3.5)

## **2.4 Category One Definition**

Category One child eligibility is defined as the child's participation in one of the following: Food Stamps, SSI, Medicaid, Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), Child And Parent Services (CAPS) program, or Peach Care for Kids. Documentation of the child's participation must be verified and kept on file for review. Children who participate in the free and reduced meal program through the center/school in which they attend may also be counted if income eligibility is verified on each child and kept on file for review.

## **2.5 Category Two Definition**

Category Two children are those who do not meet the requirements for Category One eligibility.

## **3.0 Enrollment**

### **3.1 Open Enrollment**

Enrollment for the program must be open and nondiscriminatory. Providers shall develop written policies to meet the needs of children and families in the community. The written enrollment policies should be kept on-site and available to parents. The definition and implementation of such policies are determined

by individual providers. **Providers cannot require immunization or a Certificate of Eye, Ear and Dental Examinations (EED) as a condition of enrollment. Providers cannot require upfront payment of meal fees or participation in summer programs as a condition of enrollment.** A child cannot be denied participation in the program pending verification of his/her status related to Category One or extended day services. Children cannot be denied participation on the basis of race, color, or national origin (Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964); sex (Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972 and Title II of the Vocational Education Amendments of 1976); or disability (Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990) in educational programs. A completed Pre-K registration form is required for all children attending Pre-K and shall be kept on-site and available to Bright from the Start staff.

### **3.2 Waiting Lists**

A waiting list shall be maintained at the site level for all children who complete a registration form but are not attending due to lack of space. Information maintained should include the first and last legal name of the child, gender, date of birth, child's address and county of residence, date the child was placed on the waiting list, parent name and contact information. Waiting list information should not include any Category One information. All families asking to be placed on the waiting list must complete the Wait List Information Form (See Appendix M). Waiting list forms shall be kept on-site and available to Bright from the Start staff.

Waiting List shall be entered in PANDA. Submitting a waiting list is mandatory for all Pre-K programs. Wait list information shall be submitted six times throughout the school year. Failure to submit Wait List information can result in probation.

### **3.3 Category One and Category Two Designation After Enrollment**

The provider is responsible for determining Category One or Category Two designation. Documentation must be on site to indicate that this information has been requested from families. Children should not be identified as Category One and Category Two at the time of enrollment. This information must be reported to Bright from the Start on the first roster and updated each roster reporting period.

### **3.4 Local School Attendance Zones**

A child who resides within the local school system, but not within the attendance zone of the specific school providing the Pre-K program, may not be denied service, but may be placed on a waiting list until all children who do reside within the attendance zone of the specific school are enrolled. A child who resides within another local school system's attendance zone may not be denied service, but may be placed on a waiting list until all children who do reside within the district are enrolled, and may be required to pay out-of-district tuition depending on local board of education policies.

### **3.5 Procedures for Disenrollment or Suspension of a Child from the Program**

Disenrollment and extended suspension requires prior Bright from the Start approval. Disenrollment or extended suspension without prior Bright from the Start approval shall automatically place a school/center on probation. Once a child has been enrolled, he or she cannot be disenrolled or suspended from the Pre-K program, unless it is determined that he/she is:

- not benefiting from the program
- chronically disruptive

- Represents a habitual pattern of behavior (as opposed to the rare or occasional outburst on the part of the acutely fatigued or stressed child); and
- Repeatedly or substantially interferes with the teacher's ability to communicate effectively with the students in the class or with the ability of the other students to learn; and/or
- Involves three (3) or more incidents of aggression (fighting, bullying or threatening, use of weapon that could cause serious injury), significant property damage or destruction, theft, and repeated violation of rules, age-appropriate social norms, or rights of others.
- causing harm to himself or herself or others
- chronically tardy or absent from the program (See Section 3.6)
- not enrolled in extended day program and is continually picked up late (See Section 3.6)

### **Suspension Procedures**

Immediate suspension for up to two (2) days can be made at any time the Pre-K provider determines a child is causing harm to himself or herself or others. No Bright from the Start prior approval is needed; however, the program's Pre-K Consultant must be notified in writing that such action has been taken immediately upon suspension.

- Extended suspension (i.e., more than two days and/or more than three incidents of immediate suspension) requires prior Bright from the Start approval. Submit the following information to the Pre-K Inclusion Coordinator for approval prior to the extended suspension.
  - Reason(s) why extended suspension is being requested
  - Attempted interventions used to help the child benefit from the program
  - All documentation of written correspondence and meeting notes showing ongoing involvement with the parents
  - Resource Coordination actions, if applicable
  - Behavioral and instructional observations of the child supporting the extended suspension
  - Documentation of consultation with local school system special needs personnel, results of application of suggested interventions, and status of special education referral if applicable

### **Disenrollment Procedures**

Disenrollment requires prior Bright from the Start approval. Disenrollment without prior Bright from the Start approval shall automatically place a school/center on probation. Submit the following information to Bright from the Start:

- Reason(s) why disenrollment is being requested
- Attempted interventions used to help the child benefit from the program, including any suspension information
- All documentation of written correspondence and meeting notes showing ongoing involvement with the parents
- Resource Coordinator (RC) documentation, if applicable
- Behavioral and instructional observations of the child that support the reasons for requested disenrollment
- All documentation of consultation with local school system special needs personnel, results of application of suggested interventions, and status of special education referral, if applicable

Decisions about disenrollment shall be made by Bright from the Start staff after a review of all requested documentation.

Disenrollment requests and documentation should be mailed to:  
Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning  
Attention: Suspensions/Disenrollment  
10 Park Place South, Suite 200  
Atlanta, GA 30303

### **3.6 Procedures for Chronic Absenteeism or Tardiness**

Children who do not attend on a regular basis, are routinely late, or routinely leave the program early should be referred to the Pre-K Project Director or Resource Coordinator. A meeting with the parent/guardian should occur to determine the reason(s) for the problem and identify ways to resolve the problem. Providers are required to document efforts to assist parents/guardians in improving absenteeism or tardiness. Inability to resolve the problem after documented interventions should be referred in writing to Bright from the Start for disenrollment consideration. Chronic tardiness is defined as late arrival or early departure more than once per week. Chronic absenteeism is defined as missing more than two days per month without medical or other reasonable explanation. Chronic tardiness or absenteeism may also be defined by an established regular attendance pattern(s), e.g., if a child is late every Monday or absent every Tuesday or leaves early every Friday. Providers are required to provide documentation of intervention with parents/guardians of children who meet the definition of chronically tardy or absent. Children who continue to be chronically tardy or absent after intervention must be disenrolled.

Children who do not attend class, are late or leave early for ten consecutive days without a medical or other reasonable explanation, **must** be removed from the roster, and Bright from the Start must be immediately notified in writing that such action has been taken.

A student whose parent or legal guardian is in military service in the armed forces of the United States or the National Guard, and such parent or legal guardian has been called to duty for or is on leave from overseas deployment to a combat zone or combat support posting, shall be granted excused absences, up to a maximum of five additional school days per school year, for the day or days missed from school to visit with his or her parent or legal guardian prior to such parent's or legal guardian's deployment or during such parent's or legal guardian's leave. Families shall provide a written statement for the child's file to document the absence.

All information related to tardies/absences should be mailed directly to:  
Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning  
ATTN: Tardies/Absences  
10 Park Place South, Suite 200  
Atlanta, GA 30303

### 3.7 Health Services

All children attending Georgia's Pre-K Program must have a Certificate of Eye, Ear and Dental Examinations (Georgia Department of Human Resources Form 3300) and a DHR Certificate of Immunization Form 3231. Form 3231 must have either the "date of expiration" or "school attendance" block checked. Children who attend Pre-K must be up-to-date on all immunizations required for school entry plus Haemophilus influenza type B (Hib) vaccine.

Children may register before completion of these examinations and certificates. However, the immunization certificate must be on file within 30 calendar days and the Certificate of Eye, Ear and Dental Examinations (EED) indicating that children have passed these screenings must be on file within 90 calendar days, of the start of the child's Pre-K program. Children are not required to have evidence of age-appropriate immunizations or certificates prior to these 30-day or 90-day time lines.

Expired certificates should be updated within 30 calendar days of the expiration date. Any child who does not present a completed certificate within the 30 or 90 calendar day time line will be asked not to return to your program until an updated certificate is provided and on-site. A child who presents a valid appointment card for either a 3231 or 3300 appointment can remain in the program until the date of the appointment. An updated certificate, letter from a physician about continued treatment, or another appointment card is expected to be provided upon the child's return to the program.

Pre-K providers should work with health departments and other health professionals to secure basic screens within the 90-day time frame. Health checks for Category One children are recommended. If the child is Medicaid eligible, Bright from the Start recommends that the Resource Coordinator or Pre-K provider work with the health department to secure screens and/or health checks as soon as possible. Children should be referred or taken, with parent permission, to the health department when a health related problem is suspected.

Pre-K providers shall document follow-up on "untestable" or Provisional status of EEDs and assist parents in getting the child screened. If a box is marked Needs Further Professional Examination, it is expected that the Pre-K site shall have documentation of the follow-up that is occurring (doctor's notes, scheduled appointments, information from parents, etc.). Families should be asked to bring updated and completed certificates after each appointment and follow-up visit. It is the goal of the Pre-K Program to have a completed and valid certificate (3231 and 3300) for each child enrolled in the Pre-K Program prior to Kindergarten registration.

The Pre-K provider shall ensure that evidence of age-appropriate immunizations or signed affidavits against such immunizations are maintained for each Pre-K child. Immunizations must be up-to-date or affidavits must be on file within 30 calendar days of the start of the child's Pre-K program. Pre-K providers should assist families in obtaining these immunizations within the 30-day time frame. Documentation of attempts to assist families should be maintained on-site in children's files.

When children enter the program later in the year, the Pre-K provider shall make every effort to obtain EEDs as soon as possible to identify any follow-up needed. Waiting 90 days to obtain EEDs for children who enroll later in the school year, may not leave sufficient time to identify problems that could hinder the child's ability to learn.

### **3.8 Children with Disabilities**

A child who is age eligible for the Pre-K Program and is identified as eligible for special education and/or related services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) shall not be denied access to the Pre-K program. Placement in appropriate special education and related services is determined by the child's Individualized Education Program (IEP) and recommendations of the placement committee.

When the Pre-K provider refers a child suspected of having disabilities to the local school system, the referral request must be submitted to the special education program in the public school system in which the child resides.

**Note:** Dual enrollment in public school system preschool disabilities classes and Georgia's Pre-K program is permitted.

## **4.0 Instructional Services/Curriculum**

### **4.1 Curriculum**

The Pre-K provider shall provide a complete educational program in accordance with age-appropriate instructional practice and use a Bright from the Start approved curriculum. Approved curricula for this year include Bank Street, Creative Curriculum, High/Scope, 2008-2009 High Reach Curriculum for Pre-K, Montessori, Blueprint for Early Literacy, Opening the World of Learning, Pinnacle Early Childhood Curriculum, Scholastic Early Learning, or a Georgia's Pre-K approved locally developed curriculum. Best Practices is not a curriculum choice. It is an in-service teacher training initiative that supports all curricula. The curriculum choice designated in the Pre-K contract must be implemented and may not be changed without prior written approval from Bright from the Start. Bright from the Start will be reviewing all curricula beginning July 2008. Expected completion of review will be January 2009 and will be included with the 2009-2010 Georgia's Pre-K Program Application.

A program using the Montessori Curriculum must have a Montessori credentialed lead teacher to be in compliance. The lead teacher with Montessori credentials could also be certified or have a four-year-degree and receive payment at those higher levels.

Bright from the Start must approve any supplemental curriculum or locally developed curriculum. Any requests for approval must be sent to your Pre-K Consultant. Written approval from Bright from the Start is required and must be kept on-site for consultant review.

### **4.2 Lesson Plans**

Written lesson plans containing specific instructional activities are required for a minimum of 6.5 hours per day. Lesson plans are expected to be completed weekly and kept on-site for the entire school year. Lesson plans, current and past, will be reviewed by the Pre-K Consultant while completing the PQA. These plans should be based on Bright from the Start content standards and include educational experiences in the areas of language/literacy, math, science, social studies, creative (music, art, and drama), social and emotional, and physical development. A corresponding content standard(s) should be included on the lesson plan with each of the planned instructional activities. Outside play is expected to

be included in the written lesson plans. Meals and rest time will make up a portion of the 6.5 hour instructional day.

### **4.3 Assessment**

The Pre-K provider shall ensure that current child assessment procedures reflect appropriate practices for young children. All Georgia's Pre-K Programs are required to implement the Georgia's Pre-K Child Assessment including the Work Sampling System and the Georgia's Pre-K Progress Report. Any additional resource assessment testing must have prior approval from the program's Pre-K Consultant on a yearly basis.

Instructional staff shall maintain and update a portfolio for each child in the Pre-K program. The portfolio is a purposeful collection of student work samples and other documentation of performance collected over time to show the student's effort, progress, and achievements. The portfolio includes selected work samples as well as observation documentation including but not limited to anecdotal notes, brief notes, matrices, batch notes, tallies, audio or video tapes, and photographs.

Observation documentation and student work samples are to be organized by the child's name and domain. Observation documentation and student work samples shall reflect the children's ongoing growth and development in all domains (language/literacy, math, science, social studies, creative, physical, and social/emotional). All observation documentation and student work samples should be dated, include the child's name and the learning domain.

No additional assessment tools should be utilized without written approval from a Pre-K consultant prior to use in the Pre-K program. Programs that have used additional approved assessment tools prior to this school year must resubmit a request for use to the Pre-K consultant and receive permission prior to use. Any additional assessment tools must be developmentally appropriate and enhance, not duplicate or conflict with, the Georgia's Pre-K Child Assessment processes and procedures.

Georgia's Pre-K Child Assessment documents including the Pre-K Progress Report form may not be altered in any way without prior approval from the Assistant Commissioner for Pre-K.

**Note:** Use of pass/fail criteria or letter grades are inappropriate practices.

Information on each child's performance including the Georgia's Pre-K Progress Report shall be shared with parents or guardians at the two documented family conferences required during the school year. The two family conferences correspond to the fall/winter and spring reporting periods of the Georgia's Pre-K Child Assessment.

The following student assessment data shall be retained for a minimum of three years as specified in your contract:

- The Work Sampling System P-4 Developmental Checklist
- The Georgia's Pre-K Progress Report (pages 1 and 2)
- Documentation of Conferences



New teachers (who have never taught in the Georgia's Pre-K Program) shall receive Georgia's Pre-K Child Assessment training on day 3 of the four day New Teacher Institute.

See Appendix O for the Assessment Materials List.

#### **4.4 Parent Participation**

The Pre-K provider shall make opportunities available for parents to participate in their child's educational experience. Parents should be encouraged to volunteer their time, talents, and experiences in the classroom. Additionally, the Pre-K provider shall offer parent meetings to keep parents informed throughout the school year. At least two documented individual conferences per year between the teachers and parent/guardian shall be held to discuss the child's growth and development using the Georgia's Pre-K Child Assessment. Documentation of these conferences shall be kept in each child's on-site file.

#### **4.5 Student Discipline**

No employee shall use any form of corporal punishment (which includes but is not limited to paddling, striking, or hitting) as a method of discipline in Georgia's Pre-K Program. Providers licensed by Bright from the Start can also refer to the discipline section 591-1-1-.11 in *Rules of Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning, effective March 1, 1998*.

#### **4.6 Record Keeping**

Current year records must be maintained at the Pre-K site. The Pre-K provider shall retain the following records for a minimum of **three** years as specified in your contract for Pre-K services:

- Pre-K registration form
- Student Roster Information Form
- Daily child attendance records
- Class enrollment rosters
- Age documentation
- Residency Documentation
- Assessment information (see Section 4.3)
- Documentation related to suspension and/or disenrollment
- Parent orientation and conference documentation
- Category One documentation
- Receipts and other financial records supporting expenses charged to Pre-K program (see Section 19.0)

### **5.0 Equipment, Materials, and Supplies**

#### **5.1 Maintenance**

Pre-K providers shall maintain adequate and appropriate equipment, materials, and supplies for each Pre-K classroom. All materials shall be in good repair. Refer to the Bright from the Start Basic Equipment, Materials, and Supplies Inventory List for recommendations. (See Appendix D)

## 5.2 Playground Equipment

All Pre-K classrooms must be fully equipped (as verified by your Bright from the Start Pre-K consultant) to serve the designated children per class before approval is granted to purchase outdoor playground equipment.

Purchase requests for stationary playground equipment shall be reviewed on a case-by-case basis and require prior approval from the Bright from the Start Pre-K consultant assigned to the Pre-K provider's program. Purchases of stationary playground equipment with Pre-K funds made without prior approval shall result in automatic probation and a request for return of the expended funds.

See Section 21.2 for the deadline on these requests.

## 5.3 Instructional Technology

Instructional technology purchases, such as computers or software, for Pre-K classes require prior approval from your Bright from the Start Pre-K consultant assigned to the program. Purchases of instructional technology items with Pre-K funds made without approval shall result in automatic probation and a request for return of the expended funds.

See Section 21.2 for the deadline on these requests.

## 5.4 New/Expansion Equipment, Materials, and Supplies

All new/expansion programs must submit equipment, materials, and supplies purchase lists to your Bright from the Start Pre-K consultant for approval **prior to purchasing**. Bright from the Start Pre-K consultants shall assist new/expansion programs in coordinating this process.

## 6.0 Delivery of Services

### 6.1 Classroom Delivery

Each classroom shall have:

- Licensed space for a minimum of 18 children
- A minimum of 18 and a maximum of 20 children enrolled. Full funding is based on a class of 20
- Two adults (lead teacher, teacher assistant, and/or substitute) present at all times during the 6.5 hours of instructional time each day of operation, with the exception of the one-half to one hour nap time
- Approved equipment, materials, and supplies

**Note:** The maximum class size is 20 students. A Montessori setting serving more than 20 children requires prior Bright from the Start approval AND the addition of staff to maintain the equivalent of the adult/child ratio of 1:10.

### 6.2 Program Delivery

The Pre-K program shall provide 6.5 hours of instructional time, five days per week, and 180 days per year for eligible children. Pre-K providers are required to prepare and provide a school year calendar that accounts for 190 days which includes 180 days of service to families and 10 days of Pre-K related activities/duties (pre- and post-planning, staff development, in-service days.) Set-up and takedown of the Pre-K classroom are expected to happen during pre- and post-planning days.

### 6.3 Orientation

An on-site orientation for all teaching and administrative staff and an orientation for families shall be provided within 20 working days of commencement of Pre-K services for children. The school year calendar shall be shared with families and with Pre-K staff during orientations.

During the family orientation, parents shall receive written information concerning meal and extended day charges, including charges during times when children are out of school for holidays. Orientation would be an excellent opportunity for parents to complete the Student Roster Information Form. Gender, race/ethnicity, English language proficiency, and special education participation are the required fields on the rosters. Documentation of these orientation sessions should be available in on-site program files. See Appendix I for suggested topics to cover with staff and families. See Appendix K for the *Student Roster Information Form*.

### 6.4 Licensing

The facility shall meet the licensing requirements of the appropriate licensing agencies. At a minimum, the license shall cover the 6.5-hour instructional program.

### 6.5 Substitutes

The Pre-K provider shall ensure that a substitute lead teacher and/or substitute teacher assistant is present and working in the Pre-K classroom for each day that a lead teacher and/or teacher assistant is absent, whether due to illness, required training, personal leave, etc. See Sections 11.4 and 11.5 for additional information.

### 6.6 Rest Time

To maximize instructional activities, rest time should not exceed one hour per day except when necessary to address specific needs of individual children. Children who do not rest shall be given quiet activities such as books and puzzles. All children shall have a covering (sheet) on their individual rest equipment (mat or cot) as well as a covering (blanket) for themselves. During the scheduled rest period, a ratio of one adult providing direct supervision to 20 children is acceptable. Rest time cannot exceed one hour.

### 6.7 Other Program Components

- **No part of the Pre-K day may be religious in nature.**
- A “moment of silence” is an acceptable practice at mealtimes.
- Lunch, snacks, and supervised outdoor play are part of the Pre-K program.
- Breakfast may be included at the discretion of the Pre-K provider but should be offered prior to the start of the 6.5-hour instructional day.

**Note:** Breakfast as part of the instructional program (i.e., a teacher-directed language development time, a center-time activity, etc.) is permissible.

Pre-K providers who participate in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) may not charge additional fees for food (breakfast, lunch or snacks) for any child for whom CACFP reimbursement is

received. Pre-K providers who do not participate in the Child and Adult Care Food Program may not charge Category One children/families for food services. (See Section 19.7)

**Note:** See Section 8.0 for additional information and recommended fees.

### **6.8 Program/Staff Hours**

The 6.5 hours of instructional time shall begin no earlier than 7:30 a.m. with hours of operation as delineated in the original approved application. The remaining 1.5 hours of the lead teacher and teacher assistant eight hour day must be used for Pre-K program activities such as parent conferences, meetings with RCs, instructional planning, etc. Using Pre-K staff during the eight hour Pre-K day to supervise children not enrolled in Georgia's Pre-K Program is unacceptable. Using Pre-K staff paid by the Pre-K grant (during the eight hour Pre-K day) to supervise children whose parents pay private fees or for whom the provider receives subsidies is an inappropriate use of Pre-K funds and shall automatically place the program on probation.

### **6.9 Transportation**

Transportation services are optional and may be provided for any Pre-K children at the discretion of the Pre-K provider.

Transportation reimbursement shall be provided for any Category One child transported to and from the program on a daily basis as reported on Bright from the Start rosters. The Pre-K provider may establish reasonable transportation zones. (See Section 18.1)

**Note:** Field trips are considered part of the instructional program and are not considered transportation for purposes of reporting or funding.

### **6.10 Extended Day (Before and After School Care)**

Bright from the Start does not require or provide extended day services. Extended day services for Pre-K children may be provided at the parent's expense and choice. Fees for all Pre-K children participating in extended day services should be reasonable. Bright from the Start recommends that fees for extended day services not exceed \$35-\$75 per week. Income eligible families may receive services through the Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS) subsidized child care programs (CAPS). These arrangements should be made between the center, parents, and local DFCS office. Bright from the Start and DFCS have entered into an agreement ensuring that eligible Pre-K families shall not be placed on waiting lists. This is the extent of Bright from the Start involvement in extended day services. Payment reimbursement for DFCS funded slots shall be contingent upon DFCS standards for individual counties.

**Note:** Children receiving summer care shall no longer be given priority if they are enrolled in Pre-K. Effective 2005 and thereafter, only Pre-K extended care during the school year is allowable under UAS 555 and 556. Summer care is no longer covered under those UAS codes.

## 7.0 **Support Services**

### 7.1 **Objectives**

Support services are a vital component to the success of the Pre-K program. Project Directors are responsible for carrying out the objectives either directly or through the Resource Coordination program (RC). The following objectives should serve as a guide for activities Pre-K providers and/or their RCs should provide to all Pre-K children and their families:

Overall Objectives:

- Health - No child should exit the Pre-K program with an undetected condition that could hinder his/her ability to learn. Any child with identified needs shall be referred to the proper resource or agency for access to and coordination of services. Documentation of referrals shall be kept on site.
- Child Development - Family knowledge of the child's development and involvement in their educational experience shall be enhanced through a variety of informational seminars, volunteer opportunities at the center/school, parent/center conferences, etc. Families shall be encouraged to read to their children daily and complete activities with their children, such as those contained in Bright from the Start's parent newsletter, *Pre-K Parent Post*.
- Community Resources - *Upon request*, families shall be provided information about community resources such as GED, TANF (Temporary Assistance to Needy Families), PeachCare for Kids, help in obtaining extended day services, etc.
- Kindergarten Readiness Initiative - Help shall be provided to obtain all necessary documentation and health related requirements for kindergarten registration before the end of the Pre-K school year.
- Ready for School Kits –Distribution and orientation for families about the activity packets. These kits are a component of the Pre-K program and are designed to provide continuation of instruction to assist in kindergarten readiness and to maintain academic gains during the summer between Pre-K and kindergarten.

### 7.2 **Support Services to Category One Children**

Services that shall be coordinated for **Category One** children and their families by Pre-K providers and RCs include:

- Health
- Child Development
- Community Resources, upon request
- Kindergarten Transition Activities

### 7.3 **Resource Coordination**

Provision of Resource Coordination (RC) services is optional. The purpose of the RC grant is to provide children and their families with *voluntary* access to services that shall assist in enabling the child to be ready for school. Pre-K providers who wish to offer RC services must submit a separate RC grant application on-line.

## 7.4 Eligibility Requirements

- Must have provided Pre-K services for one year
- Must have eight (8) Category 1 children enrolled in each site that receives services
- Must maintain a high quality instructional program (meets or exceeds PQA)
- Must submit rosters and total program summaries by deadlines
- Must be in compliance with all applicable divisions of Bright from the Start

## 7.5 Resource Coordination Application Process

The grant evaluation process is highly competitive and not all grants shall be funded. Grants shall be ranked and awarded based on the application score results. Reviewers outside of Bright from the Start shall evaluate all applications. If funded, the grant amount may not be the amount requested. The grant application, licensing reports, and PQA scores shall all be part of the application process. Currently funded programs shall also be evaluated on past Resource Coordination Services and the RC checklist. Grant applications shall be available on-line from Bright from the Start during the open application period.

## 7.6 Reports and Training

To be in compliance and eligible for funding for the next school year, all reports and documentation must be submitted **on time** during the current school year. Reports include:

- Total Program Summary
- Reconciliation Report
- Rosters
- Waiting Lists

Submitting reports is the responsibility of the Project Director and a lack of compliance shall affect future funding. RC funds are awarded at the company or Board of Education level and turning in reports late for one site shall impact overall funding.

**Note:** Each RC must attend all appropriate Bright from the Start training.

## 7.7 Resource Coordinator Credentials

All RCs must have a minimum of an Associate's Degree or equivalent college credit in Social Work, Early Childhood Education, Special Education, Psychology, Sociology or a related field. A Bachelor's degree, in any field of study, is an acceptable credential for an RC. Current programs in good standing may request a one year credential waiver for RCs that are already employed by their program. Each year the waiver shall be evaluated based on the applicant's progress towards the required credential. See Appendix N for the *Resource Coordinator Credential Waiver* form.

## 7.8 Resource Coordination Services

Services that shall be coordinated through the RC grant include, but are not limited to:

- Specific services provided to all children
- Assistance with identified health issues
- Resource and referral assistance to families
- Family informational seminars/workshops
- Parent education/volunteer program

- Transition Activities
- Literacy Activities for children and families
- Community Collaboration Activities

### **7.9 Resource Coordination Record-Keeping Requirements**

The documentation listed below must be kept on site for at least three years and available to the Pre-K Consultant. Programs shall:

- Maintain accurate records (on-site) for completing the *Resource Coordination Report: Activity Program Summary*
- Document meetings and/or contact with Pre-K teachers to discuss relevant information concerning children and families
- Provide and document an orientation to Pre-K families within 20 working days of the beginning of the instructional program
- Document participation in the Kindergarten Readiness Initiative
- Retain records for a minimum of three years as specified in your contract, including documentation needed for the annual reconciliation
- Document participation in a community collaborative
- Document opportunities for parents to participate in their child's education

### **7.10 Resource Coordinator Notebook**

Each RC shall be required to keep a notebook on site and available for the Pre-K Consultant to review. The RC notebook is the documentation that shall be used to evaluate the RC services provided by the program. It should include parents' contact forms for each Category One child in your program as well as rosters and Total Program Summary Reports. Documentation of Kindergarten Readiness plans, collaboration efforts, workshops, newsletters and family literacy activities shall also be included. Notebooks shall also include documentation for activities that are counted on the Total Program Summary Report.

### **7.11 Full-Time Resource Coordinator Hours/Caseload**

Full-time RC's must work a minimum of 40 hours per week. Flexible RC staff schedules are necessary and defined by the needs of the families being served. Full-time RCs should serve between 50-70 Category One families depending on the services required. Each site that is served by an RC must have at least eight (8) Category One children enrolled in order to be eligible for Resource Coordination services.

A RC shall **not** serve as lead teacher, teacher assistant, project director, principal, assistant principal, school counselor, childcare center director or assistant director, bus driver, substitute teacher, bus monitor, receptionist, cook, janitor, field trip organizer, or in any other role that diverts attention from his or her primary role, as a resource to families.

### **7.12 Duties**

The RC staff shall:

- Implement the Strengthening Families program

- Assist in the coordination of services for children and families through multiple partnerships with public and private agencies by linking family members to needed services in the community
- Provide opportunities for parents to enhance their knowledge of their child's development
- Conduct weekly meetings or have regular contact with Pre-K teachers to discuss relevant information concerning children and families
- Provide an orientation about RC services to Category One families
- Assist non-Category One families as requested
- Maintain lists of community resources

Examples of appropriate RC duties include, but are not limited to:

- Planning and implementing parent workshops
- Conducting written and oral surveys of parent needs
- Referring children for special needs evaluations
- Assisting parents in obtaining EEDs (Eye, Ear & Dental) or Immunization Certificates
- Referring parents for job skills training, job interviews
- Assisting parents in obtaining housing
- Observing children in the classroom upon teacher/director/principal referral
- Assisting parents in applying for DFCS extended day services
- Acting as a liaison between public school or private providers for children/parents
- Contacting parents about chronic tardiness or absenteeism and assisting them in complying with guidelines
- Maintaining documentation of RC activities, including services to children and families

RCs working as part of Family Connection collaborative may participate as part of the Targeted Case Management team.

## **8.0 Program Fees**

### **8.1 Instructional Program Fees**

All children must receive the same instructional opportunities during the 6.5-hour instructional program day. Fees may not be charged to Category One or Category Two families during this time. For example, if dance, art, or computer classes are included in the 6.5-hour day, they must be free and available to all Pre-K children. Field trips are a part of the instructional program. Therefore, field trips made during the day must be free and available to all children. Parents who participate in field trips may be charged a fee. Pre-K funds may be used to provide field trips or other appropriate activities to the children.

No fees may be charged to any child for services needed to operate the instructional program, such as registration, field trips, curriculum fees, classroom supplies, etc. Bright from the Start recommends that providers not solicit "donations" of materials and supplies as most parents shall consider it a mandate instead of a donation.



## 8.2 Extracurricular Activities

Families shall choose whether or not to participate in “extracurricular activities” such as school photographs. Families may be charged fees for these extracurricular activities.

**Note:** If every Pre-K child is photographed, this activity may occur during the Pre-K instructional day.

## 8.3 Fee Structure

Written documentation explaining the fee structure for non-Pre-K program days (holiday/vacation times, teacher work days) for Category One and Category Two children, transportation (optional), and/or food services for Category Two children shall be given to each family. Copies of this documentation should be kept on file. Bright from the Start may request copies of individual Pre-K provider fee structure policies. **While not required, it is recommended that providers explain and have parents sign a statement that they understand charges for non-Pre-K program days.**

## 8.4 Category One Fees

The Pre-K provider may **not** charge Category One children any fees for health services (e.g., Health Checks), transportation services (if provided) or any services or activities coordinated under resource coordination or instructional services components of the program during the 180 days.

Pre-K providers may **not** charge Category One children fees for food services. Pre-K funds may be used to purchase food if no Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) funding is received.

## 8.5 Category Two Fees

The Pre-K provider may charge reasonable fees for health services (e.g., Health Checks), food services and/or transportation services (if provided) to Category Two children/families. It is recommended that fees for food to Category Two families **not** exceed \$20 per week in private programs serving breakfast and lunch. The cost should be less than \$20 if breakfast is not served. Pre-K funds may be used to purchase food. Pre-K providers may **not** charge Category Two families fees for food for any child for whom CACFP reimbursement is received.

## 8.6 School Uniforms

The purchase of school uniforms cannot be required for participation in the Pre-K program, including special attire (T-shirts) for field trips. Centers with uniform policies may request that parents dress children in uniforms. However, eligible children cannot be denied access to the Pre-K program for failure to meet the request. Providers are urged to provide uniforms for those who cannot afford them or work with the RC to secure uniforms. With prior Bright from the Start approval, Pre-K funds may be used for this purpose.

## 8.7 Graduation

Bright from the Start does not recommend “graduation” for four-year-old children as an appropriate activity. It is Bright from the Start’s belief that transitioning from Pre-K to Kindergarten marks the beginning of the child’s formal schooling experience, not the ending. More appropriate activities include, but are not limited to, a field day, an open house, family/child picnic, dinner, etc. Graduation ceremonies or other end of the year programs and practice for such should not be conducted during instructional time. Pre-K funds may not be used for any type of “graduation” activities.

## **9.0 Bright from the Start Technical Assistance**

### **9.1 Pre-K Consultant Support**

Bright from the Start Pre-K staff work closely with providers throughout the year and are available for consultation purposes regarding questions about the program, problems with maintaining enrollment, approval of equipment/materials/supplies requests, training needs, etc.

### **9.2 On-Site Evaluation**

Bright from the Start Pre-K staff shall make announced and unannounced visits throughout the year to monitor and evaluate program progress.

### **Program Quality Assessment (PQA)**

In an effort to help providers determine compliance with Pre-K program requirements early in the school year, providers shall be trained at Director meetings on how to use the PQA to assess their class(es). Bright from the Start Pre-K consultants shall use this instrument during visits throughout the school year.

Bright from the Start Pre-K consultants shall use the PQA to evaluate the Pre-K program, and one PQA shall become part of the formal file. The PQA shall provide a “snapshot” of the Pre-K program and will help identify program strengths and areas in need of improvement. Pre-K providers shall be verbally informed of the program’s ratings and asked to sign a copy of the report on the day of the visit. A copy of the report shall be left at the center on that day. See Appendix B for a copy of the PQA and Appendix C for the Definitions and Clarifications.

**Any Not Met (NM) scores require a written response from the Pre-K Project Director within 10 days of the evaluation.** The Pre-K consultant will use this documentation to determine technical assistance needs and appropriate follow-up steps. Staff will work closely with sites with identified needs to support them in addressing program deficiencies. It is not Bright from the Start practice to change PQA scores based on the written response.

Programs that are implementing a Montessori curriculum can download a copy of The Montessori PQA on the website ( [www.decal.ga.gov](http://www.decal.ga.gov) ).

Staff shall work closely with sites with identified technical assistance needs in order to bring them into compliance with program requirements and allow them to maintain their funding viability. Completing a PQA self-study is an excellent way to prepare for the visit by the Pre-K consultant and helps identify areas in need of technical assistance. PQA Self-study forms can be found on the website ([www.decal.ga.gov](http://www.decal.ga.gov)). Bright from the Start has also developed a PQA on-line learning module. For information about how to access the PQA on-line learning module, please contact your Pre-K Consultant.

## **10.0 Probation**

### **10.1 Definition and Reasons for Probation**

**Probation is a status that warns a provider of the possibility of funding loss due to program quality issues or failure to follow Pre-K Providers’ Operating Guidelines. Programs on probation**

**are not guaranteed continuing classes for the following year. Contracts shall be held or not be offered to sites on probation. (See Section 20.0) Reasons for probation:**

- Failure to correct on-going quality issues
- Multiple instances of failing to follow specific guidelines
- Failure to submit mandatory reports by due dates
- Automatic Probation
  - o Disenrollment or extended suspension without prior Bright from the Start approval (See Section 3.5)
  - o Failure to submit required information and documents to Bright from the Start (including roster and wait lists)
  - o Inappropriate staffing (See Section 6.1)
  - o Ineligible birthdates and lack of birth documentation
  - o Lack of credentialed lead teacher (See Section 12.3)
  - o Purchases of stationary playground equipment with Pre-K funds without prior approval (See Section 5.2)
  - o Purchases of instructional technology items with Pre-K funds without prior approval (See Section 5.3)
  - o Serious or repeated instances involving noncompliance with program requirements (Pre-K, Child Care Services, Nutrition Services, or Audit)
  - o Moving a Pre-K site without permission from Bright from the Start

## **10.2 Probation Process**

- Bright from the Start Pre-K consultants shall use the PQA to evaluate the quality of the Pre-K program. The Pre-K Project Director shall be required to submit a written response for Not Met (NM) and/or Partially Met (PM) scores within 10 days of the evaluation. Additional technical assistance may be requested if needed.
- All Pre-K sites on probation will receive a minimum of three PQA visits during the school year to monitor and report on progress.
- An office conference with the Pre-K Project Director and Bright from the Start staff shall be scheduled to discuss the probationary status. During the meeting, the Project Director and Bright from the Start staff shall work together to develop an action plan to bring the program into compliance. A technical assistance plan will be developed at this time.
- Any site on probation must also complete the following:
  - PQA on-line learning module
  - Assessment on-line learning module
  - Attend a quality tour hosted by Bright from the Start

Sites remaining in probationary status for more than one school year may lose funding for at least one class. Reduction in the number of classes has been shown to be an effective means for quality improvement; it is easier to maintain quality with fewer classes. Sites with only one class may lose all Pre-K funding.

## **10.3 Peer Review Process**

Programs that continue to have unresolved probation issues, despite technical assistance, may have their Georgia's Pre-K Program contract denied or revoked. In such circumstances, providers may appeal

the Bright from the Start decision before a Peer Review committee. The Peer Review process is not available to Pre-K programs identified with **serious or repeated instances involving noncompliance with program requirements (Child Care Services, Nutrition Services, Audit/AUP, Quality Initiatives)**, fraudulent roster, teacher credential, audit (Pre-K or federal nutrition programs) irregularities, loss of nutrition program due to serious deficiencies, low enrollment, and/or repeated issues with insufficient teacher credentials.

## PERSONNEL AND TRAINING

### 11.0 General Personnel and Training Information

#### 11.1 Criminal Background Checks

All Pre-K program personnel in licensed child care learning centers must have completed a satisfactory criminal background check with documentation on file with the Pre-K provider. All Pre-K personnel in public schools must comply with public school regulations concerning background checks.

#### 11.2 Employees

All Pre-K program personnel are employees of the Pre-K provider, not Bright from the Start or the State of Georgia.

#### 11.3 Salaries

All Lead Teachers and Assistants shall receive a 2.5% increase effective September 1, 2008. The Department **requires** that Pre-K providers pay lead teachers a minimum salary based on the teacher's credentials. This minimum salary amount reflects 90% of the salary funded by Bright from the Start to the provider. The minimum salary amount does not include any additional benefits the teacher may receive. The Department requires the following minimum salaries:

Certified-  $\$33,424.00 \times 90\% = \$30,081.60$  (See Section 12.3)

Four-year college degree-  $\$24,252.25 \times 90\% = \$21,827.02$  (See Section 12.3)

Two-year degree/Montessori Diploma-  $\$20,014.48 \times 90\% = \$18,013.03$  (See Section 12.3)

#### 11.4 Substitute Teacher Employment Requirements

The Pre-K provider shall ensure that a substitute lead teacher and/or substitute teacher assistant is present and working in the Pre-K classroom (during the 180 day student school year) for each day that a lead teacher and/or teacher assistant is absent, whether due to illness, required training or personal leave, etc. A substitute teacher must meet **ALL** of the following minimum requirements:

- Be at least 21 years of age except as noted in Section 13.4
- Possess a high school diploma or its equivalent
- Have experience working with children younger than five years of age
- Possess proficient verbal and written communication skills

### 11.5 Long-Term Substitutes

A long-term substitute is a substitute for the lead teacher who will be in the Pre-K classroom for longer than three weeks (i.e., lead teacher on maternity leave or extended leave longer than three weeks.) Programs are required to submit a Long-Term Substitute Request to their Pre-K consultant for approval. Programs should attempt to have long-term substitutes with a credential equivalent to the credential of the original lead teacher. See Appendix G for the Long-Term Substitute Request form.

### 11.6 Reporting Teacher Changes

Programs will submit a *Teacher Notification* form to Bright from the Start when and if there is change in status for a lead teacher. This form will be completed each time a new teacher is hired for a Pre-K classroom. The form will also be completed to document a change in a lead teacher's credential level. See Appendix F for the *Teacher Notification* form.

## 12.0 Lead Teachers

### 12.1 Days of Service

All lead teachers are funded based on a full 10 month salary. Pre-K providers are required to staff each Pre-K class with a lead teacher for 190 days of service– 180 days of active classroom instruction to Pre-K children and 10 days of Pre-K related activities/duties (pre- post planning, staff development, in-service days.) Lead Teacher payments are calculated based on the confirmed credential rate of the lead teacher or the insufficient rate when vacant or not sufficiently documented utilizing the actual days each month of employment. Classes without a sufficiently credentialed teacher are paid at the insufficient rate which is equal to the assistant teacher salary.

**Note:** If a Pre-K provider requires teachers to work more than the 190 days required by the Pre-K program (actual classroom instruction = 180 days and teacher planning = 10 days), the Pre-K provider cannot use Pre-K program funds to cover the additional work time.

### 12.2 Age Requirement

All lead teachers must be at least 21 years of age or older. Lead teachers, teacher assistants, and substitutes who have a valid AA credential or higher teaching credential do not have to meet the minimum 21 years of age requirement.

### 12.3 Credential / Certification Requirements

All lead teachers must hold a minimum of an Associate's Degree that meets the credential requirements outlined below.

A lead teacher must have one of the following valid and current certificates or credentials from a nationally or state recognized institution approved by the department. Questions or concerns about teacher credentials can be sent to: [panda.teachers@dec.al.gov](mailto:panda.teachers@dec.al.gov).

#### ***Certified–***

Georgia Teaching certificate issued by Professional Standards Commission (PSC) in

- Early Childhood Education (grades P-5),

- Birth to Five
- P-12 Certificate **AND** Special Education Preschool Endorsement (ages 3-5)
- P-12 Certificate **AND** Birth to Five Endorsement
- Special Education Curriculum Consultative/ECE (P-5)

**OR**

- Out-of-state, valid and current, official teaching certificates in Early Childhood or Elementary Education (conditionally acceptable during the teacher's first Georgia's Pre-K school year)

**Note:** Only the certificates listed above qualify for certified teacher funding rates. Teachers receiving National Board Certification shall receive the salary bonus available to all public school teachers under the new law effective July 1, 2006 =§ 20-2-212.2 which requires that the teacher teach in a "High-needs school" meaning a Georgia public school that has received an unacceptable rating for a period of two or more consecutive years. It is the responsibility of the provider to supply adequate documentation to support this status. Further information regarding teacher certification can be found on the PSC website ( [www.gapsc.com](http://www.gapsc.com) ).

**OR**

#### ***Four-Year College Degree–***

- Education field specified with P-12 endorsement in the following fields will be accepted:
  - Health and Physical Education (P-12)
  - Art Education (P-12)
  - Music (P-12)
  - Reading (P-12)
  - Special Education (P-5)
  - Special Education (P-12)
  - **MIDDLE or SECONDARY Certificates do not qualify.**

Any additional P-12 endorsements must be submitted and reviewed through the teacher credential waiver system for approval.

#### **A four-year college degree**

- In early childhood or elementary education
- An education/child development related field documented by an official transcript from the college/university
- Family and Consumer Science, or
- In psychology or social work (not sociology) **PLUS** one of the following:
  - valid Early Childhood Care and Education or Child Development postsecondary technical institute diploma or degree, or
  - valid Advanced Early Childhood Care and Education or Child Development and Related Care postsecondary technical institute diploma or degree, or
  - Associate degree (AA, AAS, or AS) in Early Childhood Education, or
  - a Montessori diploma, or
  - a valid nationally recognized Child Development Associate (CDA) credential, or
  - a valid nationally recognized Child Care Professional (CCP) credential.

OR

***Technical Institute Degree or Associate Degree or Montessori Diploma***

- Early Childhood Care and Education or Child Development postsecondary technical institute degree, or
- Advanced Early Childhood Care and Education or Child Development and Related Care postsecondary technical institute degree, or
- Associate degree (AA, AAS, or AS) in Early Childhood Education, or
- Montessori diploma (equivalent to two years of coursework).

**Note:** Other associate degrees or diplomas (such as General Studies, Liberal Arts, or Teacher Education) are not acceptable.

Providers are strongly encouraged to register lead and assistant teachers with the Georgia Early Care and Education Professional Development Registry (1-866-425-0220 or [www.training.dec.state.ga.us](http://www.training.dec.state.ga.us)). The Professional Development Registry is designed to review training records and transcripts, track coursework, and identify career levels and paths for Early Care and Education professionals.

Probation shall be recommended for all programs not meeting lead teacher credential requirements. Probation can lead to loss of funding in current and future years.

#### **12.4 Out-of-Country Credentials**

Credentials from outside the U.S. need to be evaluated by an educational interpreting agency such as Educational Credential Evaluators Inc. or World Education Services Inc. so that a U.S. equivalency can be determined. To view the PSC Accepted Credential Agency List go to [www.gapsc.com](http://www.gapsc.com) - under the Certification tab and select Rules. Then click on rule 505.2.21. In the document that opens, under item number 6, select the link for identified agencies. Contact the PSC for additional information on approved credential evaluators.

#### **12.5 On-Line Credentials**

On-line degree programs can be verified through The Commission on Colleges, Southern Association of Colleges and Schools at [www.sacscoc.org](http://www.sacscoc.org) or with the US Department of Education, Office of Postsecondary Education at <http://ope.ed.gov/accreditation>. Other on-line degree programs may be acceptable with proof of approved credibility and certification.

#### **12.6 Teacher Credential Waiver System**

A teacher credential waiver process has been developed so that Bright from the Start can work with providers on obtaining high quality teachers. Closely related degrees with evidence of continuing formal education working towards one of the credentials listed above shall be considered. Prior program performance shall be taken into account for approval of waivers. In addition, all teachers applying for a waiver will be required to register in the Georgia Early Care and Education Professional Development Registry to have their transcripts reviewed and professional development tracked through the system. Waiver requests and all supporting documentation must be submitted to our office in writing via mail. Electronic and faxed copies are not accepted. See Appendix E for the *Teacher Waiver Request* form. Questions or concerns about teacher credentials can be sent to: [panda.teachers@dec.state.ga.us](mailto:panda.teachers@dec.state.ga.us).

## **13.0 Teacher Assistants**

### **13.1 Days of Service**

All teachers' assistants are funded based on a full 10 month salary. Pre-K providers are required to staff each Pre-K class with an assistant teacher for 190 days of service– 180 days of classroom instruction to Pre-K children and 10 days of Pre-K related activities/ duties (pre-and post planning, staff development, in-service days.) Funding for the assistant teacher is included in the Program Summary Chart in Section 18.1. Additional certificates or credentials held by teacher assistants will not increase the level of Bright from the Start funding for that position.

**Note:** If a Pre-K provider requires teachers' assistants to work more than the time required for the Pre-K program (190 days), the Pre-K provider cannot use Pre-K program funds to pay for expenses or time related to the additional workload

### **13.2 Employment Requirements**

A teacher assistant must meet **ALL** of the following minimum requirements:

- Be at least 21 years of age. Teacher assistants who have a valid CDA credential or higher teaching credential do not have to meet the minimum 21 years of age requirement.
- Have experience working with children younger than five years of age
- Possess proficient verbal and written communication skills

### **13.3 Credential / Certification Requirements**

Beginning with the 2008 – 2009 school year, Georgia's Pre-K Program will require Assistant Teachers to hold a Child Development Associate (CDA) credential or higher.

Any one of the credentials/degrees listed below will meet the new credential requirement.

- Valid Child Development Associate (CDA) credential (issued by the Council for Professional Recognition)
- TCC (Technical Certificate of Credit) in Early Childhood Education
- TCD (Technical College Diploma) in Early Childhood Education
- AA, AAS, AAT (Associate Degree) in Early Childhood Education
- Valid Paraprofessional Certificate (issued by the Georgia Professional Standards Commission)

Pre-K Assistant Teachers, who do not currently hold any of the above credentials/degrees, will not be required to apply for a waiver for the 2008-2009 school year. Bright from the Start will allow current teacher assistants an opportunity to enroll in eligible programs of study leading to the award of one of the above ECE credentials or degree. All Pre-K Assistant Teachers should have earned a CDA or higher degree by 2010-2011 school year. Each year, documentation of work towards a credential must be provided.

### **13.4 Exception to Minimum Age Requirement**

Lead teachers, teacher assistants, and substitutes who have a valid AA credential or higher teaching credential do not have to meet the minimum 21 years of age requirement.



## 14.0 Professional Development

### 14.1 Attendance at Training

All levels of administrative, teaching, and support staff listed below are required to attend one Bright from the Start sponsored training.

- Project Directors
- Site Directors
- Principals
- Lead Teachers
- Assistant Teachers
- Resource Coordinators

“No shows” at training shall be charged \$50. Providers who register participants for training and do not cancel in writing (FAX or E-mail) within 48 hours of the training are defined as “no shows”. Providers cannot substitute inappropriate staff in the place of a staff registered for the training. For example, if the teacher cannot attend training, a site director or RC cannot attend for him/her. In the case of a “no show”, fifty dollars (\$50) for each participant shall be deducted from the next Pre-K payment. **In the case of a dispute, the provider must present written confirmation from Bright from the Start that the training was cancelled within the required timeframe.**

“Repeat training” for teaching staff shall be charged \$50. Providers should check with new teachers to determine what Bright from the Start training they have received in the past before registering them for training. In the case of a training repeat, fifty dollars (\$50) for each participant shall be deducted from the next Pre-K payment.

**All lead teachers must attend a minimum of 15 hours of Bright from the Start approved training during the school year and should have a certificate on file at the center to document attendance of these sessions. Refer to the *Bright from the Start Professional Development Training Schedule 2008-2009* for details on training.**

One copy of the *Bright from the Start Professional Development Training Schedule 2008-2009* shall be mailed to each Pre-K Project Director. It is the responsibility of the Pre-K Project Director to distribute this information to their sites. Training schedules shall be available to download from the Bright from the Start web site.

### **Child Care Licensing Information**

All Bright from the Start sponsored training is approved training for licensing purposes for second year\* lead teachers and teaching assistants. One hour of training shall count as one hour of required training for licensed child care learning centers for regulatory purposes.

First year\* lead teachers and teacher assistants (who have not worked in a Pre-K program at another site) may utilize only four clock hours of Best Practices training toward their mandatory 10 hours of training.

See *Rules of Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning*, Chapter 591-1-1, Rule 33 (Staff Training).

\* First year and second year refer to number of years a teacher has worked at your center in all capacities, not just Pre-K.

#### **14.2 Importance of Training**

To maintain quality standards, annual training is required for all staff directly associated with the Pre-K program. Bright from the Start consultants shall verify documentation of staff attendance at training sessions. Failure of providers and their staff to participate in required training during the school year shall place their program in noncompliance and may jeopardize future funding.

#### **14.3 Purpose of Teacher Training**

Bright from the Start offers multiple training opportunities for Pre-K teachers. This training is not designed or intended to prepare personnel to become Pre-K teachers. Each provider is responsible for ensuring that all teaching staff are qualified and able to deliver quality instruction on the date they are hired. Bright from the Start training is intended to enhance the skills and knowledge of teaching staff already prepared to teach in the Pre-K program. Lack of availability of Bright from the Start sponsored teacher training should not impact the ability of staff to deliver quality instruction to Pre-K children.

#### **14.4 Training Reimbursement to Staff**

The Pre-K provider shall ensure that Pre-K funds are used to pay for substitutes and costs associated with staff travel (lodging and meals in conjunction with overnight travel, mileage, parking, etc.) to all required training sessions. Pre-K funds should cover salaries and wages as well as travel expenses for staff when attending required training sessions.

**Note:** Bright from the Start recommends that Pre-K providers develop and distribute travel/expense policies to employees prior to travel. Providers should explain and have employees sign that they understand the policies in advance of travel.

## FUNDING

### 15.0 Contract Notification and Initial Budgets

#### 15.1 Application Process and Awarding of Contracts

Beginning with the 2008-2009 school year, all Pre-K applications must be submitted electronically through the **Pre-K Application and Database Access (PANDA)**. No paper applications will be accepted. To become a PANDA provider please go to the DECAL website and download the “Online Access Agreement”.

Contracts shall be awarded to Pre-K providers through a competitive process, subject to funding availability, previous program compliance (for continuation programs in good standing), and identified regional need. Compliance and standing with other Bright from the Start programs (Child Care Services, Nutrition Services, Audits, Quality Initiatives) shall be considered prior to awarding a contract. (See Section 20.4) “Good standing” is defined as programs that have maintained full classes, met all program and reporting requirements, met child care licensing regulations, met federal nutrition program rules where applicable, have no unresolved audit or reconciliation issues, and are not on probation. Bright from the Start shall contract with public and private providers for Pre-K services.

Low Roster Numbers – Any applicant operating with less than 15 children during the 2007-2008 school year on the third roster will not automatically be awarded a continuation class. The Department will review final rosters and contact those providers directly concerning the low numbers of children and make a final determination about continuation of services.

Special Note – In past years, providers have operated partially or fully funded private classes in an effort to receive funding from the Department. **Providers are strongly advised that operating private classes or funding classes at provider expense does not guarantee Department funding.** Parents should be informed prior to the beginning of school if their children are enrolled in a class that is not funded by the Department.

#### 15.2 Notification and Contract Awards

- All approved programs receive written notification of approval.
- Notification shall include information on numbers of classes/children to be served, contracted funding, and RC grant approval (if applicable).
- Start-up funds for new/expansion programs shall be processed on or before August 1, 2008 to providers with executed start-up contracts.
- The first of ten operating payments shall be processed by **August 12, 2008** to providers with executed contracts. **Note:** All payments are subject to state data processing and bank processing delays.
- Georgia certified teacher credentials shall be verified through PSC after the first roster is submitted.

#### 15.3 Class Budget

Classes with enrollments of 20 students shall receive full funding. Funding for classes with fewer than 20 students shall be reduced by 1/20<sup>th</sup> for each child below 20.

Classes with less than 17 students are subject to cancellation at the discretion of Bright from the Start.

#### **15.4 Contract Signatory**

The legal signatory for the program entity must sign the contract.

#### **15.5 Multi-County and Multi-Program Pre-K Providers**

Bright from the Start shall issue one operating contract containing separate funding amounts for each site. Funds are class-specific; therefore, Pre-K providers must spend the required minimum levels for teacher salaries and supplies for each class at each site.

#### **15.6 Funding Calculation**

Payments are calculated at the class level summing the instructional and non-instructional components for the class and then prorating the summed amount by the number of eligible children being served. The number of eligible children is calculated on a half-month convention based on submitted roster data.

#### **15.7 Start-Up/Operating Contracts**

Start-up/operating contracts shall be issued upon Bright from the Start approval. One contract shall contain specific dollar amounts for new/expansion classroom start-up equipment, materials, and supplies, and another contract shall contain specific dollar amounts for Pre-K classroom operations. Start-up funds for new/expansion programs shall be available on or before August 1, 2008 to providers with executed start-up contracts. The first of ten operating payments shall be processed by **August 12, 2008** to providers with executed contracts.

### **16.0 Expenditure Requirements**

#### **16.1 Expenditure Guidelines**

The following expenditure guidelines apply to all Pre-K providers:

- The Pre-K provider may use no more than six percent of the budget for administrative expenses. Do not include funding for newly funded/expansion class start-up funds in this calculation.
- No more than six percent of the RC grant funds can be used for administrative purposes.
- All programs shall spend a minimum of \$1,200 per classroom on classroom equipment, replacement classroom materials, classroom supplies, and/or additional classroom materials. These funds are provided in the Pre-K operating contract. This is in addition to start-up funds received for new/expansion classes.
- Classroom supplies and materials shall be selected from the Basic Equipment, Materials, and Supplies Inventory List. Flexibility related to classroom computer technology purchases and playground equipment is provided with prior approval from the Pre-K consultant, once the classroom is adequately equipped. (See Sections 5.2 and 5.3).
- Newly funded programs should refer to Section 23.0 in this document for additional guidelines.
- While Pre-K funding can be used for RC activities, RC grant funds cannot be used for Pre-K program expenses such as teacher salaries/benefits and general operating expenses.
- The Pre-K provider shall maintain full and complete program funding and expense records pertaining to the contract for a period of three years beyond the contract ending date, or until all

litigation, claims, or audit/review findings involving the records have been resolved if such claim or audit/review is started before the expiration date of the three-year period.

## **16.2 Record Keeping**

The Pre-K provider is required to keep all receipts and other records necessary to support figures reported on the annual/mid-year reconciliation statement. If a Pre-K program is audited/reviewed and receipts and other records are not available to support these amounts, funds must be returned to Bright from the Start. Examples of such records include federal and state payroll records to verify payment of lead and assistant teacher salaries, original receipts for equipment, supplies, and materials for Pre-K classrooms and documentation of the Pre-K portion of operating expenses. **See Section 19.0 for more details on audits/reviews.**

**Note: Misuse of funds may result in denial of current and future participation in the Pre-K program and/or prosecution.**

## **17.0 Reimbursement Process**

### **17.1 Automatic Deposit of Funds**

All payments shall be deposited in the Pre-K provider's bank account via an Electronic Fund Transfer (EFT) process. Appropriate forms and instructions were included in the total application package. Providers are responsible for the correct routing of their payments by promptly notifying Bright from the Start of changes in bank account information or ownership. Providers are responsible for reviewing their monthly payments and payment documentation each month. After May 15, 2009, all Pre-K payments shall be final. No additional corrections, adjustments, or payment processing shall be made after this date.

### **17.2 Start-Up Funds**

Providers shall receive a one-time lump sum payment of \$8,000 for each new or expansion class to purchase equipment, supplies, and materials for the class.

### **17.3 Enrollment Requirements for Funding**

Pre-K providers are expected to maintain the class enrollment levels specified in their contracts. Enrollment below 20 students shall reduce payments.

### **17.4 Payments**

- Start-up funds for equipment, materials, and supplies shall be available on or before August 1, 2008 for new and expansion programs awarded prior to August 1<sup>st</sup>.
- Operating funds shall automatically be deposited in accounts in ten monthly payments beginning in **August 2008**. If state data processing and the bank processing is successful the deposit shall occur by the 12<sup>th</sup> of each month or next business day. **Note:** All payments are subject to state data processing and bank processing delays.
- The final Pre-K payment for the year shall be the **May 2009** payment.
- Local school systems shall pay personnel summer salaries from 2008-2009 school year funds.

- Private providers who incur summer salary personnel expenses for the 2008-2009 school year should have written policies in place for payment of staff from other than Pre-K funds.

**Note:** Pre-K providers who maintain constant enrollments, uninterrupted teacher credentials, and RC services (if applicable) shall receive the equivalent of ten equal payments for the year. If these requirements are not met, individual payments will be adjusted accordingly.

### 17.5 Schedule of Payments

Ten (10) Payments	Level of Teacher Credentials Number of Children	Ten (10) Months
Payment Date	Based On	For the Month of
August 12, 2008	Contract	August
September 12, 2008	1 <sup>st</sup> roster	September
October 13, 2008	2 <sup>nd</sup> roster	October
November 12, 2008	3 <sup>rd</sup> roster	November
December 12, 2008	3 <sup>rd</sup> roster	December
January 12, 2009	3 <sup>rd</sup> roster	January
February 12, 2009	4 <sup>th</sup> roster	February
March 12, 2009	5 <sup>th</sup> roster	March
April 13, 2009	6 <sup>th</sup> roster (Final)	April
May 12, 2009	6 <sup>th</sup> roster (Final)	May

**Note:** All payments are subject to state data processing and bank processing delays.

### 17.6 Calculation of Payments

Payment calculations shall be based on student enrollment and the lead teacher credential for each class as reported on the submitted roster.

- The August 2008 payment shall be based on your executed contract.
- If the enrollment and the lead teacher credential reported on each of the required rosters remains consistent with your approved contract, no funding adjustment shall be made.
- Roster data is critical to the payment calculation. As students leave the class or new students are added, current and prior payments will recalculate the total number of eligible children served each month using a half-month convention to retroactively recover overpayments or pay additional amounts for each class. Recording accurate begin dates and end dates for students and teachers on each roster is required to assure accurate payment calculations.
- Lead teacher credentials and the number of enrolled children will be monitored. Documentation is required to be submitted to validate each lead teacher credential. If this documentation cannot be provided or is different from the contract awarded credential or the credential reported on the roster, payments shall be adjusted to the appropriate credential level that can be validated. Payments shall be retroactively adjusted for changes in teacher credentials.

- Attendance and enrollment records are subject to review and audit upon request. Students found to be enrolled for the same period of time in more than one class will require proof of enrollment and attendance. Payments shall be retroactively adjusted for changes in student enrollment.
- No additional corrections, adjustments or payment processing will be made after May 15, 2009 or within five (5) business days after Contractor's receipt of the final scheduled payment from the Department in accordance with the Contract (whichever occurs first).

### **17.7 Rosters**

Roster data is critical and must be accurate. Roster information is subject to audit and must be substantiated by enrollment and attendance records.

Providers are required to submit, via mail, documentation to support and verify teacher credentials. This information must be submitted when providers complete the first roster and each time there is teacher change. Programs will use the *Teacher Notification* form (See Appendix F) to submit the verification documentation. Verification documentation includes: copy of official transcripts, copy of a state issued teaching certificate, copy of a U.S. Equivalency report for out-of-country credentials, or copy of degree with major clearly listed.

Mail documentation to:

Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning

ATTN: Teacher Credentials

10 Park Place South, Suite 200

Atlanta, GA 30303

The first roster should include the names and information for children who attended Pre-K since the beginning of the school year. All changes up until the count date of August 15 should be reflected on the first roster. Children who have enrolled or registered for Pre-K, but have not attended a scheduled Pre-K instruction day should not be reported on the first roster (exception: If the class instruction begins after the first roster is due on August 20th, provider will need to report "registered" students beginning as of the August 15<sup>th</sup> count date).

Subsequent rosters should include any changes made to the previous roster. Dates must be accurate for both beginning and ending points for children and teachers so that a reduction in payment does not occur. Inaccurate reporting shall increase the probability that payments are reduced. Rosters and attendance rolls (kept in the classroom) must match.

Adjustments in roster data will only be made for the current roster period.

To reduce the number of problems with "duplicate children", it is recommended that providers contact the family of a child who is absent for three consecutive days to find out the reason for the absence. Duplicate children are those children who appear on more than one roster for the same reporting period. Since only one provider can be paid for the child, the provider who presents evidence that the child was in attendance at the time shall receive payment while the other provider will have their payment reduced. Contacting the parent can reduce the number of children who are kept on the attendance rolls when they could be attending another program. It is the responsibility of the provider to replace any child who leaves as soon as possible to prevent their payment from being reduced. While children who have been absent for 10 consecutive days without a reasonable excuse, must be removed from the roster, this does not mean that a child should be kept on the roster for 10 days after their last day of attendance.

**Roster based payments shall not be made until the required roster information is submitted.**

<b>Roster</b>	<b>Count Day</b>	<b>Due to Bright from the Start</b>
1 <sup>st</sup>	August 15, 2008	August 20, 2008
2 <sup>nd</sup>	September 15, 2008	September 19, 2008
3 <sup>rd</sup>	October 15, 2008	October 20, 2008
4 <sup>th</sup>	January 16, 2009	January 20, 2009
5 <sup>th</sup>	February 16, 2009	February 20, 2009
6 <sup>th</sup>	March 16, 2009	March 20, 2009

**Failure to submit rosters by the due date will result in delayed payments. Rosters submitted after the due date may result in payments being processed by Bright from the Start after all other payments have been made.** For example, if the first roster is received after August 20, 2008, the September payment will not be processed until the roster is received. If the second roster is received after September 20, the October payment will not be processed until possibly 3 weeks after the roster is received. If the third roster (or three rosters out of six) is not received on time, Provider will be placed on the audit list for poor administrative capacity to operate Georgia Pre-K. Providers usually receive their payments within 3-5 days after Bright from the Start processes the payment. Continued delays in submitting shall result in probation. (See Section 10.1)

## **18.0 Funding Information**

### **18.1 Program Summary Chart**

Based on the fiscal year 2008-2009 budget approved by the General Assembly, the following rates shall be effective for the 2008-2009 school year:

#### **Private Sector Rates Per Child**

Lead Teacher Credential (See Section 12.3)	Zone One Annual Rate	Zone One Monthly Rate	Zone 2 Annual Rate	Zone 2 Monthly Rate
Certified	\$4,061.84	\$406.18	\$3,732.23	\$373.22
Four-Year	\$3,502.36	\$350.24	\$3,172.75	\$317.28
Two-Year /Montessori	\$3,243.86	\$324.39	\$2,914.25	\$291.43

**Note: Zone One includes these counties: Camden, Cherokee, Clayton, Cobb, DeKalb, Douglas, Fayette, Forsyth, Fulton, Hall, Gwinnett, Henry, Paulding, and Rockdale.**

#### **Public School Sector Rates Per Child**

Lead Teacher Credential (See Section 12.3)	Annual Rate	Monthly Rate
Certified *	\$3,697.68	\$369.77
Four-Year College Degree	\$3,016.80	\$301.68
AA, AAS, AS Degree/Technical/Montessori Degree/Diploma	\$2,758.30	\$275.83

\* Plus applicable training and experience per the 2008-2009 state teacher salary schedule.



**Note: Funding rates reflect salary, benefits, and operating expenses for the core program. Additional funds are added for transportation services to Category One children.**

Transportation services for Category One children **are not** mandatory. Transportation shall be paid monthly based on submitted roster data at a rate of \$16.50 for each eligible child.

## **18.2 Local School System Salary Information**

Local school systems shall receive a training and experience factor (T&E) as a component of certified lead teacher salaries. RCs shall **not** earn the teacher certification T&E factor.

For local school systems that pay the 10-month lead teacher, teacher assistant, and RC salaries over 12 months (i.e., July and August summer salaries for program services ending by June 30, 2009) salary/benefit expenses **must** be accrued using current Pre-K funds for these costs.

## **19.0 Audit and Accounting Requirements**

### **19.1 Reconciliation Report**

Private Pre-K providers shall provide Bright from the Start with a reconciliation report spanning the dates of the contract. This report shall include supporting documentation, if requested by Bright from the Start, to verify that funds were spent in appropriate categories for their intended uses. Any unexpended funds must be returned to Bright from the Start when the report is submitted. Closeout procedures and forms regarding the 2008-2009 year-end reconciliation process shall be forwarded to Pre-K providers during July 2009.

Funds paid by Bright from the Start for Pre-K services can only be used to cover costs of the Pre-K program and the Pre-K program's prorated share of other allowable expenses expensed through normal operation of the facility. Allowable expenses are those ordinary and necessary expenses directly benefiting or resulting from Pre-K program operations.

Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP) provides authoritative guidance that must be followed for identifying the appropriate basis for allocating shared costs. The basis of allocating cost should be similar to the unit of measure for incurring the costs or consuming the expensed item. Examples include using a square footage basis for rent/mortgage expense and utilities, and a per person or average daily attendance basis is appropriate for office supplies, management staff, and transportation services, if provided. Expenses must be allocated using the most logical basis for the costs incurred. As an example, food costs would be allocated based on the number of children rather than square footage.

Expenses involving related parties must also be charged in accordance with GAAP. Related parties are one or more entities subject to the significant influence over the operating and financial policies of another entity. Providers involved in related party transactions with their centers should survey the surrounding business area and provide support that financial charges to the Pre-K program are within the range of same or similar arms-length transactions for their area. An example of related party transactions is when the owner of the facility is paid rent by the Pre-K program.

**Note:** Private providers must submit this reconciliation report by August 31, 2009 for the 2008-2009 school year. Local school systems must submit this reconciliation report by September 29, 2009 for the 2008-2009 school year.

If a provider does not complete and submit the reconciliation report, Pre-K payments for the 2009-2010 school year shall be held until the reconciliation report is received.

### **19.2 Private Nonprofit (PNP) Audits**

PNP Pre-K providers must adhere to audit requirements as specified in O.C.G.A. § 50-20-1 et seq., Relations with Nonprofit Contractors.

Before Bright from the Start enters into a contract with a nonprofit contractor, the contractor must furnish Bright from the Start with certified financial statements showing the nonprofit contractor's financial condition at the end of the previous fiscal year and revenues and expenditures for the previous fiscal year. When the nonprofit contractor has been in existence for less than a full year, the financial statements shall cover year to date operations for the current year. The financial statements shall include an individual list of each employee and his salary and reimbursable expenses, a list by category of the sources of income of the nonprofit contractor, and a list of the source or sources of all public funds received by the nonprofit contractor and the program for which the funds were received.

### **19.3 Right to Audit/ Agreed Upon Procedures Review**

Bright from the Start reserves the right to require an independent, certified financial audit of the Pre-K program at the Pre-K providers' expense. Bright from the Start reserves the right to conduct Agreed Upon Procedures (AUP) reviews. Bright from the Start may conduct audits and AUP reviews. As specified in your Georgia's Pre-K Program Contract for the 2008-2009 school year, Section III, Part C:

Contractor agrees to cooperate fully with Department auditors and/or agents providing Audit or Agreed Upon Procedures (AUP) review services. Contractor will coordinate with auditors/reviewers to have appropriate staff available during the scheduled audit/review period. Contractor will make advanced preparations for scheduled audits/reviews to make available for auditors or reviewers all identified documents, records, and entity related materials requested by the auditors/reviews for the current school year, as well as for prior school years in which Contractor participated in the Georgia Pre-K Program as requested by the Department. Contractor's failure to substantially prepare for a scheduled audit engagement or provide requested documentation or information to an auditor/reviewer during the scheduled audit period could result in the withholding of grant payments. The failure of Department to review and/or inspect the services provided or to discover a breach of this Contract or any amendment thereto shall not subsequently operate as a waiver of any remedies available to the Department.

If, in the course of an audit, there are negative audit findings the provider shall be scheduled for an audit for the subsequent school year.

### **19.4 Random Reviews**

The Pre-K provider is subject to random, unannounced expenditure reviews by Bright from the Start or Bright from the Start contract auditors during the program year.

**Note:** All records (programmatic and financial) must be retained for a minimum of three years as stated in your contract.

### **19.5 Multi-County Pre-K Provider Budgets**

Multi-county Pre-K providers shall maintain at least a minimum of one Pre-K program budget per county for Bright from the Start reporting needs.

### **19.6 Tracking of Pre-K Funds**

The Pre-K provider shall maintain financial records to track Pre-K expenditures in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles (GAAP). All records must be retained for a minimum of three years as stated in your contract.

**Note:** The Pre-K provider is required to keep all receipts and other records necessary to support figures reported on the annual/mid-year reconciliation statement. If a Pre-K program is audited and receipts and other records are not available to support these amounts, funds must be returned to Bright from the Start. Examples of such records include federal and state payroll records to verify payment of lead and assistant teacher salaries, original receipts for equipment, supplies, and materials for Pre-K classrooms, and documentation of the Pre-K portion of operating expenses.

### **19.7 Fraudulent/ Inappropriate Use of Funds**

The Pre-K provider shall ensure that expenses charged to the Pre-K funding source are not concurrently charged to another program funding source. Providers with the Child and Adult Care Food Program or Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) who are placed on the seriously deficient list and terminated from the food program shall also be terminated from the Pre-K program.

The Pre-K provider shall ensure that no Pre-K contract funds are used to pay penalties associated with adverse actions imposed by licensing or governmental agencies. Pre-K funds should be identifiable as separate from federal funds (e.g., Head Start, CACFP).

**Note: Misuse of funds may result in repayment of funds and denial of current and future participation in Georgia's Pre-K Program and/or prosecution.**

### **19.8 Expenditure Waivers**

In order to support quality programming, there are instances where a provider may request a waiver of the requirement concerning expenditures for materials/supplies and minimum teacher salary.

A waiver for the \$1,200.00 material and supply requirement may be requested if all classrooms and the playground at the site are well equipped as evidenced by the scores on the PQA. In order to receive a waiver, the Project Director must contact the Pre-K consultant for the site who shall approve the waiver requests. If a waiver is granted, the unexpended material and supply funds may only be used for teacher salary and benefits, field trips, or other instructional activities. Funds cannot be applied to non-instructional items. The waiver is approved for one year only.

Providers must meet the minimum salary requirement for lead teachers as listed earlier in Section 11.3. In the case where a lead teacher is out of the classroom frequently during the year and the substitute for that teacher is paid at a lower rate, the unused funds for teacher salary can be applied to instructional items. Unused salary funds cannot be used for non-instructional items. The Project Director should contact the Pre-K consultant who shall approve the waiver request. The waiver is approved for one year only.

## **20.0 Other Considerations**

### **20.1 Inappropriate Lead Teacher**

Non-documented or insufficient information on lead teacher credentials, beginning with the first roster, shall result in automatic probation and may jeopardize current or future participation in the Pre-K program. (See Section 10.1)

### **20.2 Inappropriate Staff/Child Ratios**

Non-documented or insufficient information on staff/child ratios shall result in automatic probation and may jeopardize current or future participation in the Pre-K program. (See Section 10.1)

### **20.3 Ineligible Birthdates and Lack of Birth Documentation**

Proof-of-age eligibility must be on file the day the child begins the Pre-K program. Failure to remove or correct ineligible Pre-K student birthdates by the first roster (See Section 17.7 for first roster due date) may result in the center/school being placed on probation with possible termination. **Providers shall not be paid for the children listed with ineligible birthdates or for children without birth documentation.** (See Section 10.1)

### **20.4 Noncompliance**

Serious or repeated instances involving noncompliance with program requirements (Pre-K, Child Care, Nutrition Services, Audit, or Quality Initiatives) shall result in immediate probation and may result in termination of the Pre-K contract during the program year. All contracts for future services shall be held pending resolution of outstanding issues. (See Section 10.1)

## REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

### **21.0 Reporting Requirements**

#### **21.1 PANDA Participation**

Pre-K providers are required to use the PANDA system to conduct Pre-K related activities (rosters, application, waiting lists, RC reports). Regular access to the internet and an email address are required to use PANDA. Using PANDA allows providers to receive regular Pre-K payments as quickly as possible, and reduces duplication of provider efforts related to child roster data.

#### **21.2 2008-2009 School Year Critical Reporting Dates**

Below are the critical reporting dates for submission of information to Bright from the Start.

<b>August 2008</b>		The Pre-K provider shall submit copies of all lead teacher credentials and/or certificates that cannot be verified electronically through the Georgia Professional Standards Commission (PSC) and other requested information to Bright from the Start.
08/15/08	<b>Roster Count Date</b>	
08/20/08	<b>Roster Due Date</b> – The Pre-K provider shall complete and submit to the Department a completed class roster, name of lead teacher. Copies of new Pre-K lead teacher credentials except those that can be verified electronically through the PSC, must be sent in to Bright from the Start..	
08/20/08	<b>Waiting List Due Date</b> – The Pre-K provider shall complete, on PANDA, waiting list information entry	
9/15/08	<b>Roster Count Date</b>	
9/19/08	<b>Roster Due Date</b> – The Pre-K provider shall complete and submit to the Department a corrected roster with changes made for students and teachers, if applicable. Copies of credentials for new teachers must be sent if they cannot be verified electronically through the PSC.	
9/19/08	<b>Waiting List Due Date</b> – The Pre-K provider shall update, on PANDA, waiting list information entry	
10/15/08	<b>Roster Count Date</b>	
10/20/08	<b>Roster Due Date</b> – The Pre-K provider shall complete and submit to the Department a corrected roster with changes made for students and teachers, if applicable. Copies of credentials for new teachers must be sent if they cannot be verified electronically through the PSC.	
10/20/08	<b>Waiting List Due Date</b> – The Pre-K provider shall update, on PANDA, waiting list information entry	
12/19/08	<b>Resource Coordination Total Summary Report due</b>	
1/16/09	<b>Roster Count Date</b>	
1/20/09	<b>Roster Due Date</b> – The Pre-K provider shall complete and submit to the Department a corrected roster with changes made for students and teachers, if applicable. Copies of credentials for new teachers must be sent if they cannot be verified electronically through the PSC.	

1/20/09	<b>Waiting List Due Date</b> – The Pre-K provider shall update, on PANDA, waiting list information entry
02/16/09	<b>Roster Count Date</b>
02/20/09	<b>Roster Due Date</b> – The Pre-K provider shall complete and submit to the Department a corrected roster with changes made for students and teachers, if applicable. Copies of credentials for new teachers must be sent if they cannot be verified electronically through the PSC.
2/20/09	<b>Waiting List Due Date</b> – The Pre-K provider shall update, on PANDA, waiting list information entry
3/16/09	<b>Roster Count Date</b>
3/20/09	<b>Roster Due Date</b> – The Pre-K provider shall complete and Submit to the Department a corrected roster with changes made for students and teachers, if applicable. Copies of credentials for new teachers must be sent if they cannot be verified electronically through the PSC.
3/20/09	<b>Waiting List Due Date</b> – The Pre-K provider shall update, on PANDA, waiting list information entry
04/15/09	<b>Funding approval deadline</b> – The deadline for approval of instructional technology and playground purchases by regional consultant.
05/15/09	<b>Final corrections and any changes to are rosters due.</b> No changes will be allowed after this date
06/05/09	<b>Final Resource Coordination Total Summary Report due</b> (or last day of school)
08/31/09	<b>Private provider 2008-2009 reconciliation reports</b> are due to the Department.
09/30/09	<b>Public school 2008-2009 reconciliation reports</b> are due to the Department.

**Note:** Rosters must include staff date of hire along with date of enrollment and birth dates for children. Rosters must be completed in order to receive payments. Additional information shall be required on enrolled children including gender, race/ethnicity, English language proficiency, and special education services. It is the responsibility of Providers to review electronic payment advice information in PANDA and alert Bright from the Start of any questionable discrepancy in the payment amount on or before **MAY 15, 2009**. Corrections and/or changes not recorded timely on submitted rosters could result in non-payment of the adjusted amount.

Bright from the Start **may** request surveys and other information during this program year. Please return any requested information according to the formats and time lines indicated by Bright from the Start.

## COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

### **22.0 Local Coordinating Council**

#### **22.1 Participation**

For the 2008-2009 school year, the existence of local coordinating councils shall be **optional for each county**. In counties where local coordinating councils are effective in the coordination of services, Bright from the Start highly recommends that the individual councils continue their efforts.

**Note:** Providers are encouraged to participate in collaboratives at the local or county level in order to better serve children and prevent duplication of services.

#### **22.2 Activities**

For counties where local coordinating councils **choose to remain active**, the following activities are suggested for facilitation:

- Update lists of local community resources and disseminate same to all sites in the county
- Collaborate to provide services for children and families in need
- Develop procedures for referral of children with special needs
- Identify providers willing to donate medical services
- Provide forums for parents to share ideas and concerns
- Provide forums for discussing and solving local concerns/problems of providers, teachers, and RC's
- Provide forums for identifying a list of substitute teachers/teacher assistants that could be utilized by all providers
- Provide a forum for sharing instructional practices
- Develop a process to share non-confidential wait list information
- Collaborate for recruitment of children to ensure that all Pre-K slots are filled
- Provide a forum for compiling and submitting suggestions to Bright from the Start

#### **22.3 Policy Development**

Local coordinating councils who wish to establish policy guidelines for providers in their communities must obtain **prior approval** from Bright from the Start before implementation of same.

## SELECT INFORMATION FOR NEW AND EXPANSION PROGRAMS

### **23.0 New and Expansion Program General Information**

- All new and expansion Pre-K classes should be adequately equipped with materials and equipment before the program begins.
- All newly funded programs must submit materials and equipment requests for approval **prior** to purchasing items with Bright from the Start start-up funds. The Bright from the Start Pre-K consultant assigned to the Pre-K program shall assist in this process. The Bright from the Start Basic Equipment, Materials, and Supplies Inventory List shall be forwarded to each new Pre-K provider by the Pre-K consultant. See Appendix D or the Bright from the Start website for the list.
- New/expansion classroom start-up funds **must** be spent for classroom equipment, materials, and supplies.
- The Pre-K provider must establish an Automated Clearinghouse (ACH) Electronic Fund Transfer (EFT) process for payments to be electronically deposited in his or her bank account. Appropriate forms and instructions are included in the total application package.
- Start-up funds for materials and equipment for new/expansion classes shall be deposited in the Pre-K provider's bank account by August 2008.
- Funds shall automatically be deposited in the Pre-K provider's account in ten monthly installments unless adjustments are necessary due to information received by Bright from the Start.
- Pre-K staff shall monitor and evaluate program progress during random visits throughout the year (See Section 9.0).
- All Pre-K staff shall be required to attend training sponsored or approved by Bright from the Start.
- All expansion classes shall be in compliance with these guidelines and the program contract.